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With this issue, I hope to resume my correspondence with you on a more frequent basis. During the interim since my last letter many changes have occurred that affect each of us as we go about our work. Reduced personnel and travel ceilings in past budgets and the necessity to redirect and/or terminate several lines of work, while trying to respond to mandates for starting new programs in several subject matter areas, necessitated major organizational and programmatic changes. Consequently, during the past few months, we have:

- * Consolidated the Northeastern Regional Administrative Office with Headquarters support functions to form a more streamlined and efficient administrative support organization for all SEA operations in the Northeast (including Washington).

- * Received approval for and implemented an early retirement plan which was chosen by 243 SEA employees.

- * Consolidated all research grant administrative management functions.

- * Implemented a plan for contracting for services where possible.

- * Streamlined and reduced the projected size of the Joint Planning and Evaluation Staff and the National Program Staff of AR.

- * Revised the responsibilities of the Headquarters staffs of Agricultural Research, Cooperative Research and Extension.

These actions have permitted the allocation of personnel slots to the program units of SEA and have clarified budgetary requirements.

Our 1981 Budget News is Good

The President's Budget for 1981, which is being presented to the Congress today, contains some good news for us and for our cooperators. Our 1981 budget proposal totals \$907,435,000. This provides for an increase of approximately \$46 million over the 1980 appropriation. The increases by SEA program units are:

- * Agricultural Research -- plus \$23.9 million
- * Cooperative Research -- plus 8.7 million
- * Extension -- plus 12.6 million
- * Technical Information -- plus .8 million

Approximately \$29.8 million of research and education programs are proposed for reduction, but it is expected that a significant portion of these programs can be redirected into newly funded and other high-priority activities. The proposed reductions include: inhouse research programs in the areas of crop and animal production efficiency, and some post harvest technology research; also Cooperative Research and Extension programs in the areas of animal health and disease, rural development, farm safety, urban gardening, and some Special Research Grants activities.

Proposed increases for 1981 will enable SEA and its cooperators to begin a limited number of new high-priority programs; to expand some existing research and extension programs at moderate levels; and to maintain other programs at current levels.

Increase requests that will help us respond to State, Federal and Congressional initiatives (\$22.0 million):

- * \$7.3 million -- to strengthen existing inhouse basic research programs in areas relating to environmental stress on plants and animals; growth-regulating phenomena and processes in plants and animals; and the nutritional quality of food.
- * \$4 million -- to expand human nutrition research with particular emphasis on nutritional needs of the elderly and of pregnant women; on methodology; on the biological availability of nutrients; and factors affecting food choices.
- * \$1 million -- for State research on antidesertification and on more economical and environmentally acceptable methods of utilizing and managing semi-arid rangeland.
- * \$600,000 -- to develop new high-yielding varieties of guayule for rubber production and new technologies for planting, growing, harvesting and processing the crop.
- * \$9 million -- to expand the Competitive Research Grants program to accelerate basic research on plant sciences and human nutrition.
- * \$100,000 -- for food quality and safety research.

Increase requests that will help us assist farmers, ranchers, producers, and others engaged in food and agriculture (\$6.3 million):

- * \$4 million -- for Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

SEA-AR will aim at accelerating the development of new or improved biological control technologies in those areas that represent the most serious barriers to rapid advancement in IPM systems. SEA-CR will utilize scientists, economists, and engineers from the consortium of 15 State land-grant institutions to improve predictive models and develop integrated systems for control of single or multiple pest complexes on cotton, alfalfa, soybeans, and apples. Also Special Research Grants will be utilized to stimulate formation of 5 to 6 new IPM teams for developing integrated systems for crop protection.

SEA-EXT will expand current IPM educational programs to additional communities and counties throughout the country. New educational materials and demonstrations for small and limited-resource farmers and for urban residents will also be developed.

- * \$900,000 -- for germplasm resources to maintain a viable collection of plant genetic resources and to broaden the germplasm base.
- * \$300,000 -- for Special Research Grants on genetic vulnerability.
- * \$500,000 -- for aquaculture research to increase the production of catfish, trout, bait minnows, crawfish, and other related fresh water species.
- * \$300,000 -- for development of farm business information systems.
- * \$250,000 -- for small farm research.

Increase requests that will help us provide information and expertise to action/regulatory and other R&D agencies (\$3.0 million):

- * \$1.3 million -- to respond to requests from EPA for expansion of Extension programs to improve the management of non-point sources of pollution.
- * \$1.0 million -- for a joint SEA/FNS-USDA effort to facilitate the incorporation into SEA's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program methods and methodologies that will encourage the purchase of nutritious foods by participants in the Food Stamp Program.
- * \$700,000 -- for SEA-USDA support for AGRISTAR, a 6-year inter-agency effort with NASA, USDC, USDI, and AID on the use and application of aerospace technology and remotely-sensed data to model and predict crop productivity.

Increase requests that will give us greater flexibility in responding to high-priority national concerns (\$44.5 million):

- * \$34.4 million -- to cover anticipated increases in financing program operations in FY 81.
- * \$3.5 million -- to begin the alteration and modification of existing Federal research facilities to reduce energy consumption.
- * \$6.6 million -- for Federal pay increases.
- * In addition, legislation is being proposed to provide \$5.0 million to the 1890 land grant colleges and Tuskegee Institute for facility construction, to be matched by funds from state and/or other sources.

How We Put the 1981 Budget Together

Our 1981 budget was built around program thrusts which cut across SEA units and the three functional areas of research, extension and teaching. I am convinced that this is the best approach in building an integrated science and education agency.

Staff work was led by JPE. Other units of SEA were deeply involved, both at staff and management levels. Inputs were obtained from many outside SEA who have a stake in our budget: cooperators, clientele groups, professional societies, action and regulatory agencies, and others.

While I was generally pleased with the process and outcome of the 1981 budget, I asked the Organization and Management Development staff to make a thorough review of the procedures we followed to see where we might improve the process for 1982. Development of that budget is already underway, and we will be seeking even broader participation in the budget development process.

Personnel Ceiling Increase

We have received some very welcome news, too, regarding personnel ceilings. Our permanent full-time personnel ceiling for the end of FY 80 was set at 8,061. Through an OMB adjustment and other transfers, SEA has been allocated a revised ceiling for FY 80 of 8,300. With very few exceptions these slots will be used to increase our scientist and scientist support positions. Restricting these slots to scientific personnel will undoubtedly achieve a more effective balance in our total staff effort, and at the same time, provide emphasis to contracting for nonscientific activities.

Changes in Joint Planning and Evaluation

Following a thorough analysis, I decided to make certain changes in the organization and staff of JPE. I cut the size of the Current and Future Priorities Staff (CFPS) and the Evaluation and Impact Staff (EIS) from the sizes that had originally been planned. I also cut the size of the core staff in the Program Development and Coordination Staff; directed other units in the Agency to assign professionals to this staff on one to two year assignments; and reassigned to it a great deal of routine staff work from other units (especially AR). This staff, which I am renaming the Program Planning Staff (PPS), will be made up of core staff, assignees from other units of SEA, assignees from ESCS and FS, and some IPAs. We are now in the process of putting the newly constituted PPS together. The first professionals from other SEA units should be assigned by the end of this month.

A number of you have asked particularly about the functions of the Evaluation and Impact Staff (EIS). It is the job of this staff to organize and carry out the evaluation studies and other analyses of SEA programs requested by the Congress, the Office of the President, the Joint Council, the Users Advisory Board, SEA management and cooperating State institutions. Our goal for EIS is that it will provide objective, timely, and high-quality studies that lead to a better-informed SEA decision-making process and strengthened and improved SEA programs. EIS is also responsible for seeing that reviews conducted by the Agency are coordinated. The staff will participate in reviews that cut across unit and functional lines, and I expect it to contribute to the development of review methodology.

Dr. John G. Stovall has been appointed Associate Deputy Director for JPE. Dr. Stovall has had nearly 20 years experience as a researcher and administrator in the field and in Washington, D.C. with TVA and with ESCS (ERS). He has been deeply involved in planning and coordination activities, and in liaison between ESCS and State agricultural experiment stations.

Competitive Research Grants Office

Our Competitive Research Grants Office under Dr. David Krogmann is now part of SEA-Cooperative Research. This makes it possible for us to unify and simplify the procedures for competitive grants as well as the special grants that SEA-CR has always been responsible for.

SEA-CR and the State partner research units have taken a number of steps to strengthen the State side of our joint planning, evaluation, analysis, and coordination--and to further integrate the State and Federal systems. The State effort is carried out under an interregional research project--IR-6. The new IR-6 Associate Director--Joseph C. Purcell from the University of Georgia--is now located at Beltsville, where he can have daily contact with the JPE staff. IR-6 has two groups--an Interregional Advisory Committee and an Interregional Technical Committee--to assist and guide the staff. IR-6 Director Bobby R. Eddleman works with these groups, acts as the principal State agricultural experiment station representative in SEA's budget development, and works closely with the JPE staff.

Since Dr. W. Neill Schaller, Deputy Director for Extension, assumed his new position as Assistant to the Secretary of Agriculture for Consumer Affairs, Dr. Mary Nell Greenwood, Associate Deputy Director, SEA-Extension, has been named Acting Deputy. Dr. Greenwood has been on the SEA-Extension staff since October 1978 and was director of Extension Programs for the University of Missouri System when she was granted leave from the University to assume the associate directorship here. The announcement for applications to fill the position of Deputy Director is being issued this week. The position will be in the SES, Career General category.

A transfer of \$1.8 million from the Food and Nutrition Service to SEA-Extension, USDA, will be used to increase participation of food stamp families in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program. Additional methods to the one-to-one approach will receive priority attention, including Spanish language programs in California, New Jersey, and New York. Altogether there are 16 projects in 18 states: Alaska, California, Georgia, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Massachusetts/Rhode Island, Michigan, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota and Vermont/Nevada.

The National Extension Evaluation, as directed by Title XIV of the 1977 Food and Agriculture Act, has been completed and will be going forward to the printer shortly. We greatly appreciate the staff help we have had from the states on this report, which should be extremely useful to all of us.

New Initiatives in Home Economics

Proposals for new initiatives in home economics, called for in the Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, are to be explored in regional meetings this spring. This noteworthy example of joint State and Federal planning for integrated research, extension and higher education efforts originated from a suggestion made to me last February by Betty Hawthorne, Chairman of the ESCOP Subcommittee on Home Economics. Her suggestion was discussed at meetings of the ECOP Subcommittee and NASULGC Commission on Home Economics, the Joint Council, and the Users Advisory Board. On the advice of these bodies, I established a Steering Committee and asked JPE to provide staff support to the activity and to work closely with other SEA staffs.

The Steering Committee has reviewed recent national studies of home economics program needs and priorities in research, extension and teaching; it has compiled and reviewed issues which have been raised by the general public, Congress, and OMB; and it has set in motion a process which will provide for broad-based participation in the development of a plan for new initiatives. Marjorie Rankin (Drexel University), National Council of Home Economics Administrators, is chairman of the Committee and Frances Magrabi (JPE) recording secretary.

The Manpower Assessment Project being directed by Dr. K. Jane Coulter in SEA's Office of Higher Education, is nearing completion, with a final report due by mid-spring. The report will address the extent to which graduates of the different educational specializations comprising higher education in the food and agricultural sciences are sufficient/insufficient to meet present and projected labor force demands. Serving as RICOP educational consultants to the project are: Dr. Stephen Chapman, Clemson University; Dr. J. Robert Cooke, Cornell University; Dr. Ed Glazener, North Carolina State University; Dr. Allan Goecker, Purdue University; Dr. David Houston, USDA Office of Equal Opportunity; Dr. Winston Pullen, University of Maine; Dr. Richard Merritt, Rutgers University; and Dr. Kenneth Reisch, Ohio State University.

A summer research apprenticeship program for minority high school students is getting underway in SEA. Students should be in the upper 1/4 of their class and have finished their junior year, or be high school graduates at the close of the 1980 winter term. Research scientists who are working on projects supported by funds through SEA-AR, SEA-CR, the Economics, Statistics, and Cooperatives Service, or Forest Service, are encouraged to become involved in this activity. Specific details will be mailed in the near future. Contact is Dr. Homer Folks, SEA-Office of Higher Education, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250.

National Agricultural Research and Extension Users Advisory Board

The Users Advisory Board has the responsibility of preparing independent advisory opinions about priorities, Federal budgets and division of responsibilities among partners conducting agricultural research and extension programs. Their reports are submitted to the Congress, President and Secretary--but are intended for the use of, and are made available to, all partners in the system. The Board's October report has impressed many people not only for its degree of consensus but also for its relevance, conciseness, and readability. If you have not seen this report and would like a copy write Dr. James Meyers, USDA-SEA, Room 351-A, Administration Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20250.

Joint Council on Food and Agricultural Sciences

While it has taken longer than many of us had anticipated, the Joint Council is making progress in putting in place the regional and national structure to carry out its major objective: to help bring about improved planning and coordination in research, extension and teaching in the food and agricultural sciences. Discussion of how to make this structure operate most effectively was a major agenda item at the quarterly meeting of the Council on January 16-18. As the Council's planning and coordination structure becomes operational, more of the JC's work will be conducted through it, and less through ad hoc activities.

Seeing Our SEA-AR Labs

In the last several months I have had the opportunity to visit many of the SEA Agricultural Research locations. I have been unfailingly pleased and impressed by the understanding and enthusiasm of our research scientists and those who work with them. The excellence of our inhouse research programs is a major strength and uniqueness of SEA. If your travels bring you close to an AR research location please take the time to visit; it will be an uplifting and enlightening experience.

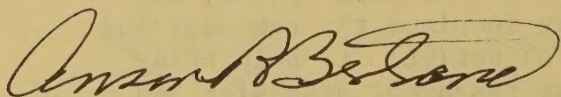
Hispanic Employment Program Manager

Mr. Armando Fernandez has joined SEA as Hispanic Employment Program Manager. Mr. Fernandez has had excellent experience with equal opportunity programs where the primary ingredients for success were commitment responsibility, accountability and cooperation. Mr. Fernandez should indeed be an asset to SEA.

Renewed Support For Science and Education

The past year, although not without some turmoil, has resulted in a coalescing of goals and objectives within SEA and brought a new level of understanding and confidence between SEA and its partners in the States. We have also been gratified to see heightened support for science and education within USDA and a tremendously increased level of support from the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy.

An increased level of support and concern for science and education in agriculture was also expressed by Congress in the FY 80 Agriculture Appropriations Act which provided increased funds to continue most of the ongoing work of SEA and its partners in the States. All of this indicates that the importance of our work is being recognized. It also requires that the quality and quantity of our products in research and education be even greater. Each of us will need to examine carefully what we are doing and plan to do to make sure that our talents and other resources are used wisely, efficiently, and effectively.



ANSON R. BERTRAND
Director
Science and Education